



MASTER FILE

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DSSD CENSUS 2000 PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM SERIES G - 10

MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan
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Attention: Decennial Design, Policy and Management Branch

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Subject: Observation of Block Canvassing for Cobb and Fulton County,
 Georgia on April 26 and 27, 1999 - Wave 3

I. INTRODUCTION

I observed the completion of the Wave III block canvassing operation in Cobb and Fulton County, Georgia on April 26 and April 27. The Local Census Office (LCO) for Cobb County completed their block canvassing operation by the April 26. However, in close proximity, the LCO for Fulton County was still conducting their block canvassing operation. So, the following day I observed block canvassing in Fulton County. In addition to the block canvassing operation, I observed part of the quality assurance (QA) operation for block canvassing at the Cobb office. Block canvassing is a field operation for Census 2000 that requires listers to canvass assigned blocks looking for every place where people live or could live. Listers will verify addresses listed on the census address list to ensure that it is as complete and accurate as possible for a successful mail out of Census 2000 forms.

From my observations, I was able to get an insight into the mechanics of carrying out the block canvassing operation. However, the listers did express to me some of their concerns and difficulties they had while in the field.

II. BLOCK CANVASSING OBSERVATION

Upon my arrival to the LCO, I was greeted by the office manager. He gave me a tour of the LCO while giving me an overview of the status of the block canvassing operation for that LCO. Most of the activity in the office involved the office review of the returned

address list books from the field. I was given a spread sheet showing the percentage of workloads completed for the LCOs in Georgia. The Marietta office was listed as being completed with their workload. The office manager was very pleased that his office had completed their workload early. Because of my visit a couple of address list books were held back so that I could observe block canvassing in that area.

Upon meeting the crew leader and the address lister that I was to observe, they expressed to me some of their concerns and difficulties they had with performing the block canvassing. One of which was that the maps were sometimes not to scale - e.g. the actual distance was shorter than the map distance. Another concern of the listers was the placement of invisible boundaries - if there was a road next to an invisible boundary, why not make the road the block boundary for the purpose of simplifying the task of canvassing the block. In addition there was question to why sometimes a road name would appear in the address list book but not on the Assignment Area (AA) map - why was there no correspondence between the two. Also, the crew leader expressed frustration with having to add addresses for a 500 unit apartment building. She expressed a desire to have a more efficient process for making address adds such as these. There was a suggestion made by the lister that the addresses should be ordered in the address book such that the addresses appear in the order in which the block is traversed. Finally, the office manager made the complaint that he was not able to obtain any business cards from headquarters. Because of the nature of his job, I would think having business cards would be critical.

Proceeding with my observation of block canvassing for the day, I went with the crew leader and the address lister to what was described to me as a "growth and development area" located in Roswell, Georgia. The homes appeared to be owned by upper income level people. We interviewed the addresses with asterisks - verified the address was correct and made sure there were no other living quarters within the houses. The lister usually asked if any of the neighboring houses had any apartments in them. One gentleman we talked to was emphatic in expressing that no other houses in the neighborhood had any apartments in them, because all the homeowners would be aware of this information. I assumed the neighborhood had a homeowners' association which kept close tabs on the activities of the homeowners. The lister kept emphasizing that none of the houses would have interior or exterior apartments because of the "class" of the neighborhood. Thus, she said that it was not absolutely necessary to verify all of the asterisked addresses. I also noticed that the lister had to make a few corrections to the road names listed on her AA map. In addition to the neighborhood, we visited a construction site near a golf course. The lister checked to see if any future housing units were being constructed. We checked with the construction manager and confirmed that no housing units were being built at the construction site. Surprisingly, we did not have any adds for the "growth and development area". For the most part, the listing for that day was a straight forward simple process.

After listing, we went back to the LCO and there I observed the office review of the address list books performed before sending them to the Data Capture Center (DCC) for keying and digitizing. The process seemed to be fairly straight forward - identifying uncorrectable critical errors then determining the critical error rate for the book. If the rate was within the acceptable range (less than five percent) the book was sent to DCC. If it failed the book was sent to repair.

Before I ended my day, I talked with the office manager for a while. He gave me an overview of all the operations that he is in charge of managing. I felt like he was venting his frustration with what I would call the "cyclical effect" of the operations. Recruiting, hiring, training and laying off people for the different operations. He described to me the process of letting "good" workers go and then trying to rehire them for the next operation which was not always possible.

The following day I went to the LCO in Atlanta to observe block canvassing in that area. After going to the office, I met a crew leader at a local shopping center. Then we drove together to a morning meeting with address listers at a local mall. There I met the address lister I was to observe. We went to an area of Atlanta called East Point. These neighborhoods were a stark contrast from the neighborhoods I observed canvassing in the day before. The community appeared to be characteristic of lower income housing. Many of the addresses we visited appeared to be single housing units but were houses that were divided up into apartments. During my observation one of these houses that was broken up into apartments was listed as a single housing unit which made it necessary for the lister to add the additional apartment addresses. This lister followed protocol and went to every address that had an asterisk in the address list book. For the addresses that had an asterisk and the lister was not able to obtain an interview, he made sure the house number on the mailbox was the same as the house number in the address binder or he asked the neighbors and then checked it off. Everybody we interviewed was more than cooperative.

III. CONCLUSION

Overall, I found my observation of block canvassing to be an invaluable experience. Being able to see the operation firsthand gave me a clear perspective of the tasks involved in canvassing a block and some of the difficulties that might be encountered. From what I observed, the LCO's appeared to be conducting the operation in a timely and efficient manner; however, I have just a few suggestions about the operation - maybe there could be a little more explanation in the training as to where the AA maps come from and how the block boundaries are chosen. In addition more emphasis could be placed on the importance of interviewing each housing unit with an asterisk by the address in the address register.

cc:

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